



August 10, 2000

Mr. John Bradley
First Assistant District Attorney
County of Williamson
405 M. L. K., No. 1
Georgetown, Texas 78626

OR2000-3051

Dear Mr. Bradley:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 138137.

The Williamson County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney") received a written request for records contained in the district attorney's file pertaining to an aggravated sexual assault of a child. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, and 552.108 of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code protects "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." The attorney general will not ordinarily raise an exception that might apply but that the governmental body has failed to claim. *See* Open Records Decision No. 325 (1982) at 1. However, this office will raise statutory confidentiality provisions because the release of confidential information could impair the rights of third parties and because the improper release of confidential information constitutes a misdemeanor. *See* Government Code § 552.352.

As noted above, the requested information consists of documents contained in the district attorney's files pertaining to an aggravated sexual assault of a child. Section 261.201(a) of the Family Code provides:

The following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent with this code and applicable federal or state law or under rules adopted by an investigating agency:

(1) a report of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect [of a child] made under this chapter and the identity of the person making the report; and

(2) except as otherwise provided in this section, *the files, reports, records, communications, audiotapes, videotapes, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.* [Emphasis added.]

You have not informed this office of any rules the district attorney has adopted that would permit access to the requested records. Because all of the requested information pertains to an investigation of sexual assault of a child, this office concludes that the district attorney must withhold these records in their entirety pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code in conjunction with section 552.101 of the Government Code.¹

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one

¹We reach this conclusion despite that the fact that the limited documents you submitted to this office clearly do not constitute a "representative sample" of all of the information at issue. See Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(D). Because we resolve your request under section 552.101, we need not address the other exceptions to disclosure you have raised.

of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Carla Gay Dickson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CGD/RWP/ljp

Ref: ID# 138137

Encl. Submitted documents

cc: Ms. Helen J. Beardsley
P.O. Box 2482
Austin, Texas 78768
(w/o enclosures)